



MindLeaps

2025

ANNUAL

REPORT

## Our Mission

MindLeaps creates educational paths for children and youth living in under-resourced communities through the creative arts and 21st century skills built on data-driven metrics.



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# FOUNDER'S NOTE

Dear Friends,

**In 2025, MindLeaps served 3,665 children and families across five countries.** But what does it really mean to “serve” these children and families?

To us, it means unlocking the tremendous, innate potential of each individual—whether a student or a mother—to pursue and achieve their own goals.

## **What does that look like in practice?**

In **Rwanda**, it looks like Community Facilitator Salama managing savings-and-loans groups for 350 women.

In **Uganda**, it looks like 24-year-old Hafswa graduating from high school and joining MindLeaps as a teaching assistant in our Dance & Data Program.

In **Guinea**, it looks like 18-year-old Kerfala, after failing his national exam, asking us to double his tutoring so he could “overcome this fear and become smarter next year.”

In **Mauritania**, it looks like 60 young women completing vocational training in professional trades—gaining the option to choose employment over early marriage.

And in **New York City**, it looks like our students taking the stage in a professional theater for the first time, performing before a sold-out audience.

You will meet Salama, Hafswa, Kerfala, and many more remarkable individuals in this report. What I hope you take away from their stories is their growing sense of agency and self-worth.

Perhaps student Ezira says it best:

***“You come to MindLeaps when you’re lost. You leave MindLeaps when you see your future.”***



*Women's Day Celebration in Rwanda at MindLeaps*



*Young women in Mauritania celebrate after training*



*NYC students pose after their performance at the theater*

**MindLeaps is an international organization that uses dance, combined with data metrics, to foster life skills in at-risk youth in under-resourced communities.** Through a dance program based on **social-emotional learning growth**, children strengthen their resolve to succeed in education and graduate from high school. Along their academic journey, they are supported with school fees, academic tutoring, and mentorship. At the same time, MindLeaps connects with the children's caregivers and parents to build their economic independence through our Family Strengthening Program. **The ultimate goal is for the family unit to reach self-reliance.**

In 2025, MindLeaps consolidated our programs onto two continents, focusing on Africa and growing our work in New York City (NYC). **We have a long-term vision of creating meaningful exchanges between the two continents through travel and academic learning programs.** Allowing children to see just how similar and different we are from one another can generate a kind of learning that supersedes academic environments and dance studios. This year, we continued to increase intracontinental travel for staff as well as international travel of teaching artists and senior leaders in preparation for this larger vision. **We maintained our \$1.3 million budget despite international funding cuts and are grateful for the individual and foundation supporters that stepped in to replace lost government funding.**

When I look back at our **11 years of organizational history**, I think “**enabler**” is the right word to describe MindLeaps. **We enable children and families to reach their goals.** I feel fortunate every day to work with **103 staff in five countries** who are motivated to advance their communities and know that they have the power to do so.

Every year, it may feel like the world becomes more challenging, unpredictable and chaotic. But, let's recognize—and celebrate—that we are part of an ecosystem of supporters, people, partners and families that prove that change is possible.

Thank you for being an integral part of our ecosystem.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Davis  
Founder & Executive Director



*Trainer Yves and Rebecca leap at MindLeaps Rwanda's Jim Bell Center*

**Scan here to watch our 5-minute video about MindLeaps' Global Programs in 2025!**



*2025 MindLeaps Global Video*

# ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

## Rebecca Davis Dance Company



At a time when our world seems increasingly unpredictable, and our knowledge of traditional rules and systems has been challenged, the evolution of MindLeaps gives some insight into how community models evolve—and what makes them so strong and durable.

Founder Rebecca Davis' life revolves around the notion and belief that dance is a tool to promote social justice. She first pursued that as an entrepreneur, establishing "The Rebecca Davis Dance Company" (RDDC) in 2005.

## MindLeaps in 2014



Based in Philadelphia, RDDC brought to life original contemporary ballets focused on broad-ranging social justice topics: the downfall of Enron, the genocide in Darfur, and totalitarian regimes like that depicted in Huxley's *Brave New World*. (Many of the dancers who performed in RDDC ballets are now international dance instructors with MindLeaps—some are even Board members!)

During the creative process to produce the ballet about Darfur, Rebecca traveled to Rwanda to

## MindLeaps in 2018



better understand post-genocide reconciliation. This led to further projects in post-conflict countries—including Bosnia-Herzegovina. Over the course of three years, Rebecca partnered with educators, dancers, and psychologists in Africa, the USA, and the Balkans, to ultimately build MindLeaps' Dance & Data model: a movement-based curriculum that advances the mindsets of youth living in challenging environments.

In 2010, RDDC sunsetted, and in 2014, MindLeaps was formed. Over the next 11 years, MindLeaps

## MindLeaps in 2025



grew into an international NGO that now works permanently in 5 countries, employs 103 local staff, and runs an annual budget of \$1.3 million USD. Today, more than 50% of MindLeaps' staff were originally students or dance teachers in the program, and over 80% of the staff are dancers or former dancers.

When people who are passionate about change in their community are equipped with creative tools that appeal to their strengths and beliefs, transformation happens—and keeps happening!

# OUR IMPACT IN 2025

**2,266** Students in our  
Dance Program

**1,376** Students in our  
Education Program

**794** Caregivers in our  
Livelihoods Program

**756** Students Sponsored  
in School

**125** Small Businesses Run  
by Single Mothers

**103** Total Staff  
Employed

**84** Graduates from  
Formal Education &  
Vocational Training  
Centers

**\$1,300,428**

**Annual Budget (USD)\***

*\*unaudited number*



# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS **FY 2025**

## **Global: Thank you, Interim Executive Director Ryan Neil!**

A special thank you to Ryan who stepped in to guide MindLeaps in early 2025 as Rebecca Davis finished her maternity leave. Ryan is now back at Georgetown University's Center for Global Health Practice and Impact, serving as the Senior Program Manager.



**January**

## **Global: Rebecca presents at AMADE Foundation**

Founder Rebecca Davis was invited to present about MindLeaps' innovative work in quantitatively tracking changes in social-emotional learning through arts-based programming at AMADE Foundation's Annual Conference in Monaco.



**April**

## **Guinea: MindLeaps Performs at Festival des Mangues**

MindLeaps was invited to perform in the "Festival of the Mangoes". Twelve students traveled from the capital city of Conakry to Kindia to take the stage.



**May**

## **US: Harlem-based Breaker Kid Glyde Teaches with MindLeaps**

US Breakdancer Kid Glyde joined MindLeaps teaching team to work with children affected by parental incarceration at our summer program with Children of Promise in the Bronx, NYC.



**July**

## **Rwanda: Partners Visit Our Sports & Employability Program**

Laureus Foundation sent technical experts to MindLeaps Rwanda to see the progress of our Community Youth Program funded by Laureus Sport for Good, the International Olympic Committee & Agence Française de Développement.



**September**

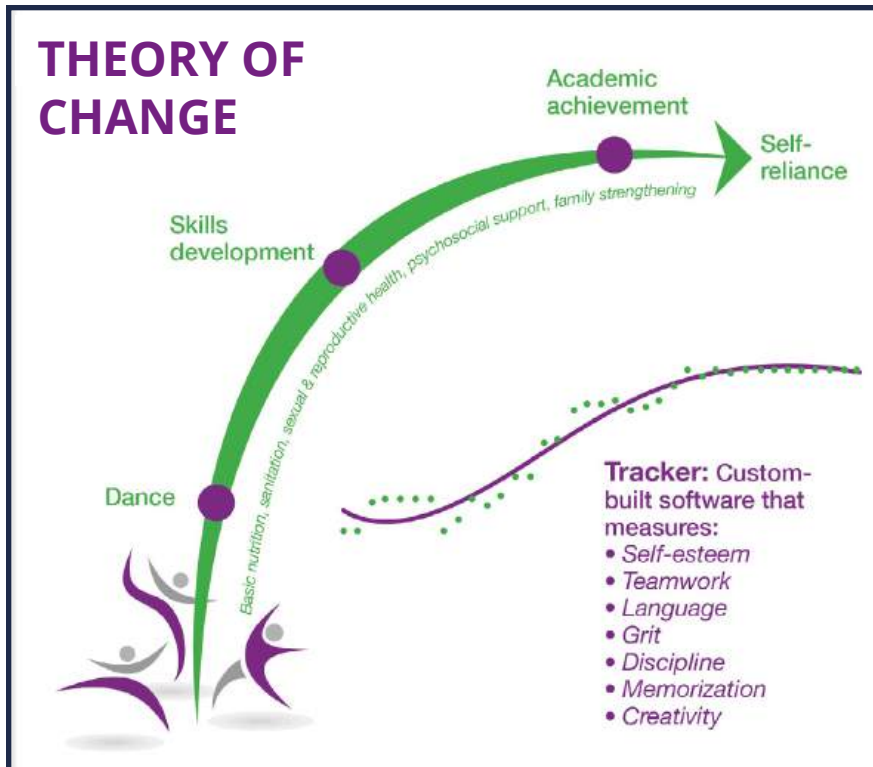
## **Global: Marking 11 Years at MindLeaps**

In NYC, our community came together to mark our 11th year serving children and youth in under-resourced communities. International staff spoke and students performed in front of 80 supporters of MindLeaps.



**October**

# OUR MODEL



## Self-reliance:

A family's ability to meet their basic needs and ensure their children are enrolled in school through to graduation.

## Academic Supports:

- Tuition Fees
- School Supplies
- Registration/Exam Fees
- School Uniforms
- Extensive After-School Academic Tutoring
- Academic Program during Vacation Periods

MindLeaps' **Theory of Change** reflects a holistic approach to supporting both the child and the family unit. Our Centers offer a comprehensive range of programs that engage children alongside their parents or caregivers, beginning with a foundation in social-emotional learning and progressing toward skills development and academic achievement. This journey may take a decade or more—but we remain committed for the long term. Our goal is to enable children, families, and communities to achieve self-reliance. **We measure our success by the number of individuals who ultimately no longer need MindLeaps!**

## Who Comes to MindLeaps?

Situated in under-resourced communities, MindLeaps Centers use the power of music and dance to attract **youth who are struggling to find their next step in life**. Their challenges range from extreme poverty to unstable housing and immigration/migration issues. The vast majority of MindLeaps' students come from **single-parent families** and some come from **child-headed households**.

When we asked caretakers, "How can we help?", the most common answers were:

*"Exposure to Better Opportunities"*

*"Access to Education"*

*"Ability to Provide for My Family"*

Each of these map to one of our three Core Programs: **Protection, Education, and Livelihoods**.



Djenab Soumah (left) and Thierno Binta Camara (right), dance students in Guinea

# Our Programs: What Happens at a MindLeaps Center?

## PROTECTION

### A Safe Space to Develop Social-Emotional Learning Skills

When young people say, “*Things won’t get better*”, they reflect a mindset that will make transformation difficult—or impossible. **The purpose of the MindLeaps’ Dance & Data Program is to inspire children to recognize their own abilities and become excited by the changes they see in themselves.** By following our rigorous and structured curriculum, children experience cognitive improvement and boosted social-emotional learning skills—preparing them for their next step forward in life.

The Dance & Data Program consists of **2-hour sessions taught 2-3 days per week for a minimum of 72 hours total.** Students are organized into groups of 15-25 children, and classes are taught by 3 MindLeaps’ certified trainers (dance teachers). The high teacher:student ratio allows MindLeaps’ trainers to capture **observational data on 7 skills.** This data, in turn, provides insight into how individual students are progressing and indicates their readiness to move into MindLeaps’ next program: Education.

## EDUCATION

### Access & Support to Graduate Secondary School

We define success as “secondary school graduation” for every MindLeaps child that began with us in Dance & Data. Children enter the program anywhere from age 7 to 16, so that may mean multiple years of formal education support.

In some of our programs, MindLeaps serves as the child’s **first step towards formal education.** In Mauritania and Guinea, we work with **out-of-school children**—some of whom are illiterate and have never gone to a schoolhouse. In Rwanda and Uganda, we provide **critical academic supports** to make sure children at-risk of dropping out actually stay in school. In New York City (NYC), MindLeaps provides **academic enrichment and early career awareness activities** for students to learn more about the arts, arts management, and career opportunities in the city.

As children progress through primary and secondary school with the hands-on support of MindLeaps, parents start to ask how they can help their other children who may not be direct beneficiaries of our financial aid programs. To address this, MindLeaps offers our Family Strengthening Program.

## LIVELIHOODS

### Family Strengthening & Economic Advancement for Caretakers

When a child enrolls at MindLeaps, they must identify a parent or caretaker to participate in our Family Strengthening Program. This is the primary way MindLeaps ensures that the child’s bond with their parent remains intact; **we are not a replacement for the power and importance of the family unit.**

Parents participate in Self-Help Groups that act as **savings-and-loans circles.** For many parents, this is their first introduction to **formal record keeping and access to banks and credit lines.** Self-Help Groups identify a leader from the participating parents, and these leaders form a Parents Committee that drives program feedback and direct communication with MindLeaps. We also **directly provide seed funds to help women open or grow small businesses** so that they have the financial means to support their families and achieve self-reliance.

As you read more about our programs in Rwanda, Uganda, Guinea, Mauritania, and NYC, you’ll see how our **Theory of Change** and our **Core Programs** meet the needs of such diverse communities and how we measure that impact.

# METRICS AND DATA

## What makes social-emotional learning so important?

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is known to help children—and adults—improve their emotional regulation and promote academic achievement (NPR, 2025). In the USA, the number of schools using SEL curricula has increased from 46% to 83% in just 7 years (CASEL, 2024). During the pandemic, SEL levels plummeted worldwide, and people recognized just how important it is to foster empathy and maintain relationships. Today, the reasons for SEL continue to grow: it is the foundation for the most sought-after skills in the job market and directly affects employability.

**An employer in Rwanda recently said, “I could hire interns from the top international schools, or I could take the MindLeaps dance kids...Without hesitation, I would hire the MindLeaps kids because they have creativity, resiliency, and grit.”**

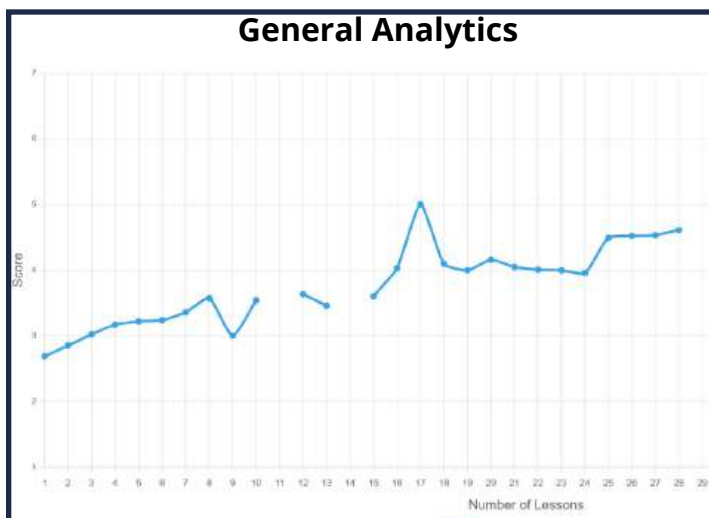
## How does the MindLeaps dance program build life skills?

Over the course of three years, researchers, teachers, dancers, and engineers worked together to build MindLeaps “Tracker,” a software system that measures changes in 7 SEL skills:

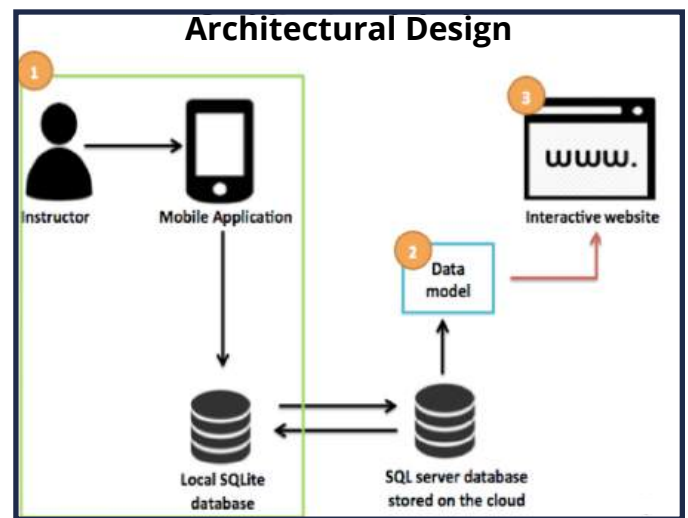
**Memorization   Grit   Discipline   Teamwork   Self-Esteem   Creativity   Language**

After each and every MindLeaps dance class, trainers use an evidence-based rubric to record students’ scores in these 7 skills. The app then compiles the data and visually displays progress charts.

**Over time, changes can be seen at the individual level and at the cohort level.**



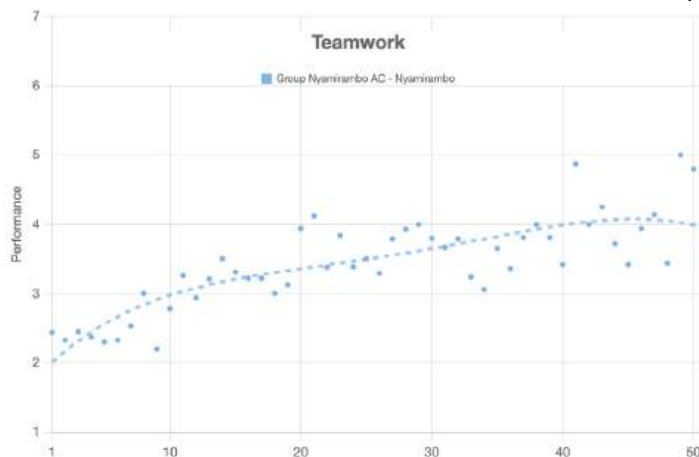
MindLeaps M&E software application that tracks changes in SEL progress of beneficiaries in our Dance & Data program



Process of data collection from the dance studio to the web portal

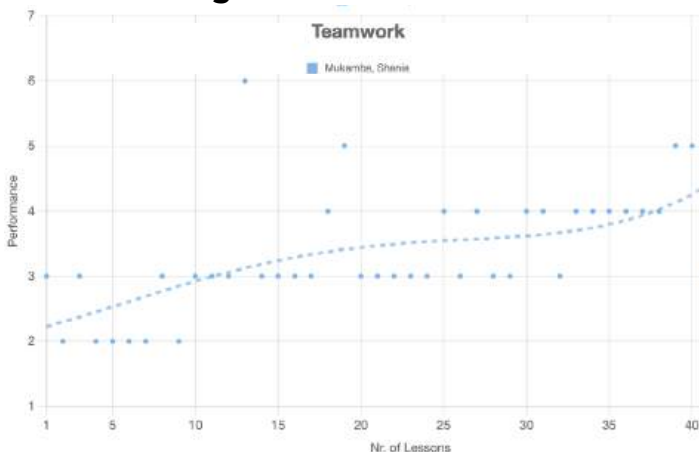
# What does learning progress look like?

## Group Progress: Teamwork Growth in MindLeaps Rwanda, Group AC



Tracker captures and displays the number of lessons (x-axis) and the social-emotional learning scores from 1 to 7 (y-axis). Left, we see that a particular group of students in MindLeaps Rwanda had average Teamwork scores ranging from 2 to 4 across 50 lessons where the highest possible score is 7.

## Individual Progress: Teamwork Growth in Shania Mukamba, student in Group AC



Tracker also looks at the progress of individual students. Rwandan student Shania Mukamba, from the group above, had scores ranging from 2.1 to 4.5 (and even 5) out of 7 in Teamwork across the 41 lessons she participated in at MindLeaps.

# How do we link social-emotional learning to academic achievement and economic empowerment?

At MindLeaps, we attribute much of our success and growth to our ability to quantitatively measure inherently qualitative things. We are now exploring how to extend Tracker to capture data from our entire Theory of Change (see page 10). **Going forward, we plan to use a new iteration of Tracker to look at the impact of our academic tutoring program and our savings-and-loans circles.** By looking at trends in attendance, academic scores, savings rates, and income levels, we will be able to better target program improvements and internally understand the interrelationships of our daily work in **Protection, Education, and Livelihoods to advance family units.**

## Who created Tracker?

The app uses the R&D created for MindLeaps from scientists at Carnegie Mellon University Africa, Oxford University (Dr. Patrick McSharry), Drexel University (Dr. Janelle Junkin), and Temple University (Dr. Mike Leeds). Special thanks to **software engineer Tomislav Pesut**, who oversees the app, and **engineer Marko Markovikj**, who manages it on a day-to-day basis.

For more information on MindLeaps' M&E system, check out this video:

Carnegie Mellon University Africa



# RWANDA



## COUNTRY CONTEXT

Rwanda is about the size of Maryland, a state in the USA, but it holds twice the population—reaching nearly 14 million people. The 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi was just over 30 years ago, and despite the country’s incredible transformation, individuals still hold those memories and impressions. In 2025, Rwanda was on the world stage when it hosted the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) Road competition in September. This marked the first-ever world cycling championship held in Africa. And, MindLeaps was part of it! Some of our students performed local, traditional dances on the UCI race days (see photo below).

MindLeaps works in four locations across Rwanda: the capital city of Kigali and three refugee camps (Mahama, Mugombwa and Kiziba). In 2025, MindLeaps expanded programming in the refugee camps to better reflect our Theory of Change. We started academic tutoring classes and savings-and-loans groups to build refugees’ earning power, creating a more holistic program for children and families beyond Dance & Data.



*MindLeaps students participate in the official events of the international cycling competition in Kigali*

## PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **953**

New Children Enrolled: **610**

Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **343**

In 2025, MindLeaps Rwanda grew its Community Youth Program, an initiative that targets high school graduates who are struggling to find employment or pursue post-secondary studies.



**Learn more in this short video:**

## EDUCATION

**School Sponsorships:** 134 children received full sponsorships to attend school.

**Tutoring & Training:** 934 children benefited from academic tutoring, sexual and reproductive health lessons, and IT training.

## LIVELIHOODS

**Active Parents/Caretakers:** 350 adults participated in savings-and-loans circles (“Self-Help Groups”).

**Small Businesses:** 60 small businesses run by mothers, providing a stable income to families.



*Mother Monique Nyirahabineza learning tailoring at MindLeaps Center*



*Student Bernice Kamana Lorenzo in Dance & Data in Mugombwa Refugee Camp*

## TRAVEL SPOTLIGHT: Ubumuntu Arts Festival

In 2025, Nigerian choreographer Emmanuel Osahor traveled to Rwanda to set an original dance piece on 16 MindLeaps students. The dance, entitled “The Dream That Didn’t Return”, was performed at the annual international arts festival, which takes place at the amphitheater of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Museum. The work tells the story of a family that is torn apart by war and a community that rises up to support that family in their grief and recovery.



**(Left)** Students perform at Ubumuntu Arts Festival  
**(Above)** Choreographer Emmanuel Osahor

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: Meet Community Facilitator Salama

Salama Numukobwa joined MindLeaps Rwanda in 2016 and has been part of MindLeaps for 9 years—almost the entire duration of the organization’s existence!

Like many MindLeaps’ staff, Salama first joined as a volunteer, but within just one year, she was hired! In fact, everyone kept telling MindLeaps Rwanda’s Country Director, “*That’s the woman for the job! That’s who we want to be on our team.*” In 2017, she became our Community Facilitator, playing a key role in the establishment and growth of our Family Strengthening Program. Today, Salama works with 350 mothers in Nyamirambo, Kigali, supporting their path towards financial independence.

At age 56, she reflected on her journey and the remarkable transformation of Rwanda: “*As someone who experienced the tragedies of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi, I feel compelled and proud that today I have contributed to women’s recovery and the development of my own community.*”



Salama Numukobwa at the MindLeaps Jim Bell Center

# GUINEA



## COUNTRY CONTEXT



Located in West Africa, Guinea — often referred to as “Guinea-Conakry” — is renowned for its rich cultural traditions in dance and music. During the presidency of Ahmed Sékou Touré in the 1950s through the 1970s, Les Ballets Africains, the state-sponsored national dance company, toured extensively throughout Europe and helped introduce Guinean music and dance traditions to international audiences. Although political instability and repeated military coups later affected the company’s global presence, dance and music remain deeply embedded in Guinean society. This enduring cultural passion is a primary reason MindLeaps established operations in Guinea.

Another major development shaping Guinea today is Simandou, the massive iron ore project that began exports at the end of 2025. Simandou is considered one of the world’s largest and highest-grade untapped iron ore deposits. The project is being managed by the Guinean government with partners from China, Australia, and the UK. Economists hope the project will stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty, which has risen since 2019. According to the World Bank, approximately 52% of Guinea’s population lives below the poverty line.

MindLeaps initially operated in Kindia before relocating to the capital, Conakry, following the country’s first Ebola outbreak. Since 2023, MindLeaps has operated from a beautiful 38,000-square-foot center in Nongo, designed specifically for MindLeaps. Today, the organization’s leadership team is composed entirely of young Guineans who first joined MindLeaps as dance trainers. Through capacity-building and experience, these young men and women have grown into skilled, passionate leaders who place children and youth at the center of every decision made at MindLeaps.



*Trainer Sékou leads class in the MindLeaps Guinea Center in Conakry*

## PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **205**

New Children Enrolled: **80**

Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **125**

## Takhouny ("Sharing" in Susu)

Scan to watch a 5-minute choreographic work created for MindLeaps Guinea's Performing Group by Choreographer Emmanuel Osahor.



## EDUCATION

**School Sponsorships:** 286 children received full sponsorships to attend school.

**Tutoring & Training:** 207 children benefited from academic tutoring, sexual and reproductive health lessons, and IT training.

## LIVELIHOODS

**Active Parents/Caretakers:** 150 adults participated in savings-and-loans circles ("Self-Help Groups").

**Small Businesses:** 20 small businesses run by mothers, providing a stable income to families.



*Souleymane from the Performing Group practices flipping in the compound of the MindLeaps Center*



*Trainer Damba (far left) visits girls at school who are on sponsorship*

## TRAVEL SPOTLIGHT: Coordinator Younoussa Travels to Mauritania

In 2025, former MindLeaps trainer Younoussa Camara was appointed International Coordinator, a crucial role at MindLeaps typically held by top dance trainers. He traveled to MindLeaps programs across Africa to ensure Dance & Data and Education programs were implemented according to our organizational standards.

It was Younoussa's first time traveling to Mauritania, and according to him, "It was a dream come true! I always wanted to visit a country with such rich religious traditions and where there's a program like MindLeaps that celebrates dance."

In Mauritania, Younoussa spent one month with the MindLeaps team in Nouakchott, training staff in the new breaking curriculum and strengthening data collection skills. He also reconnected with Mauritanian trainer Lalla, who had traveled to MindLeaps Guinea the year before. "Although we have different languages and cultures, it feels like we are connected because we do the same thing for children at MindLeaps," said Lalla.

Younoussa also traveled to Rwanda and Uganda in 2025, going from no international travel to three trips in one year. We are thrilled that he will continue helping us to improve the standardization and quality of our programs for years to come.



Younoussa (back center, white hat) in Mauritania with MindLeaps students

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: Meet Student Kerfala Camara

Just before Covid-19, MindLeaps recruited a group of new children to start the program, and Kerfala was one of them. At age 10, his mother had died, and his father was unemployed. His grandfather took responsibility for raising him but struggled to provide for his needs. Fortunately, he discovered MindLeaps.

When Kerfala started, he struggled to pay attention in class and follow instructions, but he was interested in both dance and the academic program, especially French class. Over time, MindLeaps' software showed his social-emotional learning skills improving; his scores increased from 3 to 5.36 on the 7-point scale. His teachers saw progress, and Kerfala became eager to study in a formal school.

Kerfala explains, "When I joined the MindLeaps program, I started to change in many ways. When I was not in MindLeaps, I was not working well. At MindLeaps, I started to work. I feel more confident in my studies...I like the way MindLeaps follows up with children."

Through MindLeaps' school sponsorship, Kerfala enrolled in primary school. Last year, he ranked in the top 15 of 41 students, and in 2026, he will be in Grade 7. His dream is to become a computer programmer!



Kerfala Camara practices partner lifts in MindLeaps Dance & Data class

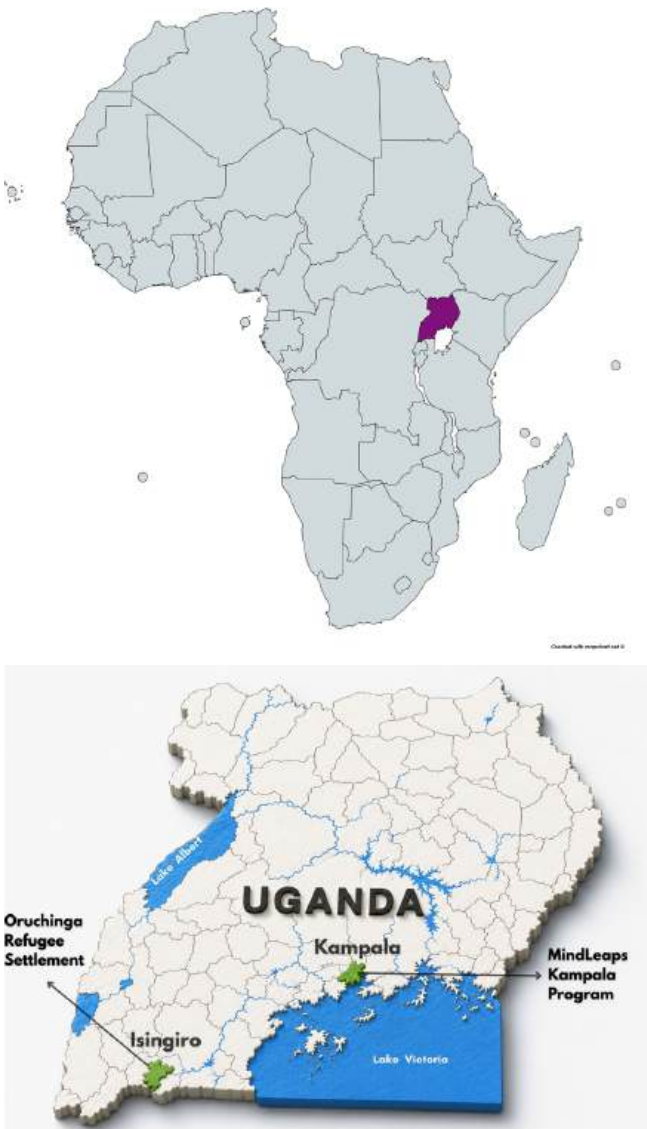
# UGANDA



# COUNTRY CONTEXT

Uganda is situated in East Africa with a population of 50 million people. It hosts 1.8 million refugees, which is the most of any state in Africa. Originally, most of the refugees were from the Democratic Republic of Congo, but now the majority come from South Sudan. Uganda also has an extremely young population, with 65-70% of the population under the age of 25 years. Toward the end of 2025, preparations were underway for the January 2026 presidential election, in which President Museveni secured victory, marking 40 consecutive years in power.

MindLeaps works in two locations in Uganda: the capital city of Kampala and Oruchinga Refugee Settlement, located in the southwestern part of the country. In Kampala, MindLeaps runs its Protection, Education, and Livelihoods programs at the MindLeaps Jewish Helping Hands Center in Katwe, one of the urban slums of Kampala. In Oruchinga, MindLeaps runs one of its largest Dance & Data programs and sponsors 116 children in formal education.



*Student Pacific Nizigiyimana practices a Russian pas de chat in MindLeaps Dance & Data class in Oruchinga Refugee Settlement*

## PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **848**  
New Children Enrolled: **400**  
Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **448**

From 2017 to 2024, MindLeaps' operations in Kampala took place in community centers across the city. In 2024, with the support of Jewish Helping Hands, our activities consolidated into one center.



See the impact of this change in our short video:

## EDUCATION

**School Sponsorships:** 189 children received full sponsorships to attend school.

**Tutoring & Training:** 125 children benefited from academic tutoring, sexual and reproductive health lessons, and IT training.

## LIVELIHOODS

**Active Parents/Caretakers:** 245 adults participated in savings-and-loans circles ("Self-Help Groups").

**Small Businesses:** 45 small businesses run by mothers, providing a stable income to families.



*Student Balkis Nakabuye in tutoring class at MindLeaps*



*Rabbi Joel E. Soffin (center) visits the Jewish Helping Hands MindLeaps Center in Kampala alongside Bashir Karenzi (left) and Rebecca Davis (right)*

## TRAVEL SPOTLIGHT: Country Director Martha Travels to NYC

In October, MindLeaps Uganda Country Director Martha traveled to the USA for the first time ever in her life. She was invited by one of our partners, United Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU) Foundation, to speak at their 10th Anniversary Gala. While in NYC, she also spoke at MindLeaps Annual NYC event and attended the MindLeaps Global Board of Directors Annual General Meeting. Here were some of Martha's reflections from her eye-opening experience:

### Q: What is your first impression of NYC?

A: *Everyone is busy going somewhere—all the time!*

### Q: What experience here sparked the most learning for you?

A: *Attending the MindLeaps Global Board of Directors Meeting...There are a lot of people here who care about the work that I and my team do in Uganda. They believe in us, and that makes me want to engage my team to do even more to deepen our impact.*

### Q: What is one thing you will do differently as a Country Director now?

A: *I plan to reorganize roles and responsibilities to make sure that each of my staff members is in the best spot to leverage their strengths, creativity, and energy to further our mission.*



Rebecca and Martha at the UNFCU Gala in NYC

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: Meet Trainer Hafswa

When you walk into MindLeaps in Kampala today, you might see Hafswa teaching in the dance studio or helping students with homework. What you might not realize is that she was a student herself not long ago.

In 2024, Hafswa, then 23, saw an advertisement for “Girls Get It!”—a dance and skills development program for girls who had not completed high school. As a single mother of two, she had been unable to continue her education and felt excluded from most youth programs in her community. She joined—and quickly thrived.

Alongside discovering freedom in dance, Hafswa earned a certificate in baking through a MindLeaps-sponsored vocational program, opening a pathway toward stable employment. Her dedication also stood out to staff, who invited her to join the teaching team—becoming a visible example to other young women that change is possible. Looking ahead, Hafswa says, “My dream is to spread positivity within my community, especially among girls who lack the opportunity to further their education.”



Hafswa practices breaking skills in our Kampala Center

# MAURITANIA



## COUNTRY CONTEXT



Mauritania is located in West Africa, but its culture is a mixture of North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Although the official language is Arabic, there are seven commonly spoken languages across the country. In fact, even the MindLeaps Team does not have a single language in common. Daily life requires that the multilingual population communicate effectively, often translating for one another in large groups. The diversity of languages is balanced by the unifying force of religion. Nearly the entire population is Muslim, and Islamic traditions influence everything from education to music.

There are two striking features of Mauritania's history: it was the last country to abolish slavery,

which happened in 1981, and access to education—particularly for girls—has been limited. In the early 2000s, only about 32% of children completed primary school (UNESCO). Today, there is significant progress, but girls' literacy and education rates are still lower than those of boys.

It is within this unique environment that MindLeaps started piloting programming in 2017 in partnership with the local organization SOS Pairs Educateurs. Both SOS and MindLeaps believed that the power of dance could be a tool to interest girls in formal activities outside of the home and spark a passion for education. Nearly 10 years later, we have seen that, in our community of El Mina, girls now expect to go to school, and families value their education.



*MindLeaps Mauritania trainers and students jump in the water on the Atlantic Coast*

## PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **180**

New Children Enrolled: **110**

Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **70**

There are several fascinating and little-known facts about Mauritania. Mauritania actually has one of the longest trains in the world; its iron ore train connects mines across the country to the Atlantic coast. The famous Richat Structure, or "Eye of the Sahara", can be seen from outer space and is used as a landmark for astronauts!

## EDUCATION

**School Sponsorships:** 147 children received full sponsorships to attend school.

**Tutoring & Training:** 110 children benefited from academic tutoring, sexual and reproductive health lessons, and IT training.

## LIVELIHOODS\*

**Young Women Enrolled in Vocational Training:** 49 women (ages 16 - 24 years) trained in hairdressing and/or tailoring.

\*MindLeaps adapted our Livelihoods Program to the context of Mauritania: instead of enrolling mothers in a formal program outside of the home, we focused on young women who are on the verge of becoming mothers unless they become financially independent. The Vocational Training Program gives these young women a choice and control over their futures.



Student Hawa Aliyen in academic tutoring at MindLeaps



Student Mohamed Khyarhom practices a passé in MindLeaps Dance & Data class

## TRAVEL SPOTLIGHT: Trainer Lalla Travels to Guinea

Lalla Tawel Oumrou runs the Performing Group at MindLeaps in Mauritania. She has been a trainer for 6 years and has risen to be our top female dancer. It is very common to hear our female students say, *"I dance because of Lalla!"*

Lalla developed a love for dance at an early age. *"Here in my country,"* says Lalla, *"Dance is often misunderstood. Female dancers, especially those practicing breakdance or contemporary styles, face social stigma. You feel like you can't do what you want to do."*

When Lalla succeeded in MindLeaps' Train The Trainer program, our primary method to recruit new teachers, she began building a career around her passion. In 2024, Lalla studied breakdancing through MindLeaps' partnership with American breaker Kid Glyde. In 2025, she had the opportunity to travel to Guinea and work with the MindLeaps Team, studying under Nigerian choreographer Emmanuel Osahor. This time, the style of dance was very different, but Lalla still excelled at the balletic and modern movements. After returning to Mauritania, Lalla used what she learned in Guinea to widen the movement vocabulary of her own students. Her journey continues to demonstrate how dance can open up possibilities and opportunities—especially for young girls!



*Trainer Lalla practices her Russian jump in the Sahara Desert in Mauritania*

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: Meet Student Mariam Youbev

Although every child's story is unique, Mariam's experience reflects that of many of our students in Mauritania. When she was 10, Mariam enrolled at MindLeaps because she wanted to dance. Soon after, the teachers realized that she could not read or write and was struggling in the academic catch-up program. Her parents did not view education as important for Mariam and discouraged her from spending time at school.

Through MindLeaps' Dance & Data program, Mariam began to make clear progress. The data showed that most of her cognitive and social-emotional learning skills improved from level 2 to level 5 on the 7-point scale (see page 12). With this concrete information, MindLeaps staff visited Mariam's parents and explained what she could achieve if she were given the chance receive a formal education. Mariam also started to develop basic literacy in Arabic and French in the MindLeaps' catch-up program. Now, we are happy to report that Mariam is continuing to thrive at MindLeaps and is enrolled in school to start her formal education next year!



*Mariam Youbev outside of SOS Pairs Educateurs Center*

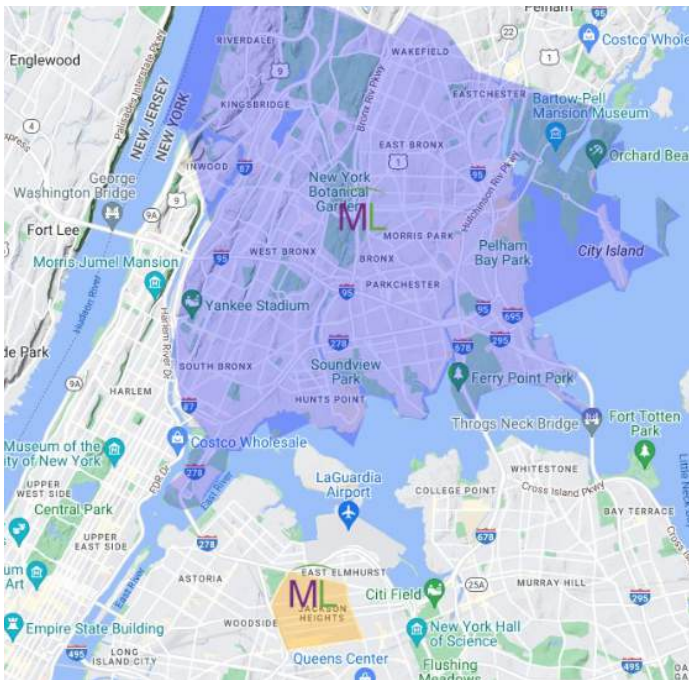
# UNITED STATES



# COUNTRY CONTEXT

Since 2022, MindLeaps has been working in the USA. After the Covid-19 pandemic and changes in political leadership, the country has gone through constant change, and programs that build social cohesion and improve emotional intelligence are needed more than ever. In 2025, MindLeaps ran programs in the Bronx and in Queens in New York City (NYC).

MindLeaps partnered with Children of Promise in the East Tremont area of the Bronx to work with children affected by parental incarceration. According to The Furman Center (NYU), 50.1% of children live below the poverty line in this community (2023). It is part of one of the poorest congressional districts in the country.



*The Bronx (purple), Jackson Heights (orange)*

MindLeaps also partnered with Queens Community House in Jackson Heights, Queens. Jackson Heights is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the country, and there are 160 different languages spoken. Here, MindLeaps worked with children of Hispanic and Latino immigrants and operated out of Public School #149. In 2025, 45% of MindLeaps students were English Language Learners, meaning that they do not speak English at home. Poverty remains high in Jackson Heights, with 78% of our students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.



*MindLeaps NYC students, teachers and parents join in a holiday celebration after Dance & Data Class at Public School #149*

## PROTECTION: DANCE & DATA

Total Children: **80**

New Children Enrolled: **70**

Alumni Children Continuing in Dance: **10**

## MindLeaps NYC Performance: April 2025

Scan to watch a 5-minute choreographic work performed by MindLeaps USA trainers and students at the Matthew Westerby Dance Company's Youth Dance Platform.



## EDUCATION & LIVELIHOODS

MindLeaps NYC is our newest program with just three years of history. The context and challenges of working in the U.S. are different since children already attend school and there are existing government services.

Our **Education Program** is called "**Career Awareness**". MindLeaps organizes events, performances, and field trips that expose our students (and their parents) to new opportunities outside of their neighborhood. In 2025, students from Jackson Heights traveled to Manhattan, some for the very first time, to perform on a stage as part of Matthew Westerby Dance Company's Youth Dance Platform. In the Bronx, US breaker Kid Glyde taught classes. Kid Glyde was a judge at the Paris Olympics and traveled to MindLeaps Guinea last year. **The goal of these activities is to broaden students' understanding and enthusiasm for the wide range of careers that are within their reach as they grow up.**

In 2026, MindLeaps is exploring the best approach to **Family Strengthening** in NYC. The first step is a needs-based assessment to **better understand the challenges parents and caretakers face** and determine how MindLeaps might address those needs.



Trainers Charles and Kid Glyde lead class at Children of Promise in the Bronx



Trainer Andrea leads class at Queens Community House in Jackson Heights

## TRAVEL SPOTLIGHT: N. Macedonia's Berat Creates New Curriculum

For years, MindLeaps trainers have been asking, "Can we have a curriculum to help us prevent injuries or treat them if they happen?" In 2025, we answered that request.

Our entire team worked closely with Berat Haxhiu from North Macedonia to write the first "Dance Injury & Prevention" curriculum for MindLeaps. Berat had been with MindLeaps since before Covid-19, first as a student, then as a Program Coordinator, and finally as a Dance Trainer. He brought a unique background: a university degree in Physical Therapy and a deep knowledge of MindLeaps.

Berat's final product, a 100+ page curriculum for MindLeaps called **Dance Injury & Prevention**, is now rolling out with field trainings in each of our countries. From North Macedonia to NYC to Africa, MindLeaps is growing in new ways!



*Physical therapist and MindLeaps Trainer Berat Haxhiu in North Macedonia*

## COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: Meet Students Valentina & Miguel

When you ask our American trainers about students who had a "transformation" in the MindLeaps Program, there is no doubt that you will hear, "Valentina & Miguel"!

Valentina, Miguel, and their parents moved from Mexico to Jackson Heights, NYC. Valentina showed early on that she was a natural leader, and other students could rarely answer questions faster than her. After a few classes, she recruited her brother, 7-year-old Miguel, to join too.

Miguel was two years younger than Valentina. He struggled with discipline and focus during the two-hour sessions, even though his enthusiasm never faded. When MindLeaps announced an upcoming performance opportunity, Valentina was thrilled and wanted to co-choreograph the piece. Miguel said he would "decide later" whether he wanted to do it. Over the next few months, he improved significantly from class to class. His attention to detail and ability to retain long choreography sequences grew; he began asking the trainers to review with him parts of the dance before class. In April, Valentina and Miguel took the stage for the first time in their lives, performing in a theater! Their mother said she could not believe how something like dance had created such a big experience in their young lives.

Over the summer, Valentina and Miguel's family made the difficult decision to move back to Mexico. When we asked about their trip, they said, "We will keep dancing in Mexico!" Dance is something that can never be taken away from you.



*Valentina (blue) and Miguel (green) with classmates and trainers Kevin and Charles*



*Miguel (green, left) and Valentina (blue, center) performing in NYC*

# IMPACT STORY

## From Refugee to Global Leader: The Story of Vedaste Ndayambaje

Born in 1996 to Congolese parents who fled conflict in Rutshuru, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Vedaste spent his formative years in Kiziba Refugee Camp in Rwanda. **“There is nothing more difficult than growing up in a refugee camp,”** Vedaste recalls. **“Life is confined to a limited space, and every day feels like the one before.”** His childhood was shaped by repetition, scarce hope, and limited possibilities. In a place with few role models and opportunities, many children hoped only to become soldiers or police officers, and schooling ended after Grade 9.

His mother believed education was the only way to transform their family’s life, so Vedaste enrolled in a school 15km outside the camp. He made the walk there and back every day, determined to access his right to learn. To help integrate with Rwandan students, he joined a traditional Rwandan dance troupe, not knowing it would lead him to MindLeaps. **He excelled in both the classroom and on stage, and his talent as a dancer earned him a full scholarship to a secondary school far from the camp.** Later, Vedaste joined Kepler University, a virtual university that allows students to earn a BA from Southern New Hampshire University (USA).

In 2018, Vedaste saw an advertisement for MindLeaps’ “Train the Trainer” program and thought it was his chance to advance his hobby, dance. He thrived in the program, and the MindLeaps international team nicknamed him **“The Leader,”** recognizing his natural ability to organize his peers and support a group working toward a goal. He was hired to lead MindLeaps’ Dance & Data program launching in Kiziba Refugee Camp.

Vedaste quickly rose through MindLeaps. The organization relocated him to the capital city so he could serve as **Education Program Coordinator**, and just a few years later, he became **Country Director**. For Vedaste, this was more than a job: **“Sharing my journey motivates young people to work hard and exceed their own expectations.”** In 2024, through a partnership between the Government of Rwanda and the United Nations, Vedaste and his refugee family were resettled in Australia. MindLeaps wanted to keep “The Leader” and Vedaste was invited to join the Global Team as a **Technical Specialist** before taking on his **current role as External Communications Assistant**. Having worked across almost every level of the organization, he brings a rare 360-degree view of its impact and now hopes to lead fundraising efforts so more children can access the opportunities he did. **“Every time I see how MindLeaps transforms the lives of youth and their families, I am driven to do more,”** Vedaste says. **“I want to help raise the resources needed to reach more people. I know how much they need us.”**



Vedaste performing traditional dance in Kiziba Refugee Camp



Vedaste as MindLeaps Rwanda Country Director with students in 2022



## MindLeaps Uganda's Martha Peace Bua Speaks at the UNFCU Foundation's 10th Anniversary Gala

United Nations Federal Credit Union Foundation invited MindLeaps' Martha to travel from Uganda to New York City to share motivational words at the Foundation's 10th anniversary gala on October 23rd. Martha also participated in the grantee partners' gathering to exchange best practices.

## MindLeaps NYC featured on Monaco Info November 16th Television program

The MindLeaps program in New York City was featured on Monaco Info in partnership with AMADE Foundation. Reporter Alexandra Pani visited the program and interviewed students and staff to create this news feature that aired on French television.



16 NOVEMBRE 2025



La danse comme vecteur d'inclusion sociale



**SPOTLIGHT ON MINDLEAPS**

Growing up in Rwanda, Noella struggled with a personal health condition, and it made her feel different from her peers. She has an acute aversion to writing and feels awkward when it comes to do math, her academic performance suffered.

A class friend reached out and encouraged her to apply to MindLeaps, which was offering online educational lessons and activities in her own language. Noella's interest. After succeeding in her first-ever interview and passing an introductory technology (IT) exam, Noella was accepted into the MindLeaps programme, which soon located her confidence.

"When I first arrived at MindLeaps, I was so afraid. I was having anxiety, but at the same time, I was excited to learn more about MindLeaps and the other activities they were doing like sport, especially dance," she shared.

MindLeaps offers several programmes across Africa to improve school performance and create positive livelihoods for young people, including *Future*, where nearly 28 per cent of young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET). MindLeaps' signature *Dance & Draw* programme targets critical cognitive and social-emotional learning skills, and consists of a digital curriculum designed to develop these skills and reinforce positive behavioural patterns.

Noella was hired as her first full-time dance sessions, but her mentors helped her look at dance from a different perspective. "The first class we did, the teachers told us that you don't have to be serious at dance. You can do whatever you want, you can be yourself," Noella said.

As Noella's passion for dance grew, so did her desire to explore other programmes MindLeaps offered, particularly graphic design. She discovered a track for working with computers and software applications, and even found herself enjoying her peers' self-taught skills. But when it started to learn more about it, I kept trying and pushing myself, and I started liking it. I realised I was good."

Through her newfound confidence and mentorship from MindLeaps, Noella decided to pursue a degree in engineering at university in the future. In the meantime, she enjoys practising contemporary dance – and leads a few dance sessions at MindLeaps.

**"When you have a problem and you don't want to talk about it, you just go in the studio and start dancing. The movement you dance expresses anything. Dancing is a form of expression."**

Noella

\*MindLeaps was one of 28 organisations supported by the Sport for Education and Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa (SEELA) partnership, a collaborative initiative between the International Olympic Committee, Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and Laureus Sport for Good.

## MindLeaps featured in the 2025 Impact Report by Laureus Sport for Good

MindLeaps made the cover photo for this impact report, produced by Laureus, that covers 330 programs in 39 countries around the world. MindLeaps Rwanda was also featured in the Education section and included the Impact Story of Noella, a community youth student now enrolled in university after finding her confidence through dance.

# LEADERSHIP



**Rebecca Davis**  
Founder & Executive Director,  
New York



**Bashir Karenzi**  
Global Director,  
New York & Rwanda



**Olivier Twagirimana**  
Africa Director,  
Rwanda



**Younoussa Camara**  
International Coordinator,  
Guinea



**Yves Bisina Akonkwa**  
Operations Manager,  
New York



**Aïssatou Diallo**  
Global Finance Officer,  
Canada



**Vedaste Ndayambaje**  
External Communications,  
Australia



**Marko Markovikj**  
Engineer,  
North Macedonia

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MindLeaps' Board of Directors provides essential guidance, strategic planning, and oversight. Among the Board's activities are fundraising, financial management, legal counsel, and strategic planning.

**Ramie Arian**, *Exiting Board Chair*  
Ramie Arian Consulting

**Robyn McLeod**, *Incoming Board Chair*  
Chatsworth Consulting Group

**Kathleen Bakarich**  
Hofstra University

**LaMar Baylor**  
Disney's The Lion King

**Rebecca Davis**  
\*ex-officio

**Hana Ginsburg Tirosh**  
Ariel Rivka Dance

**David Hartman**  
David Hartman Consulting

**Michael Maguire**  
Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation

**Daniel Penn**  
Consultant

**Demetrius Shields**  
Detroit Opera House

**Kady Sylla**  
Myriad USA

**Roger Webb**  
State Department

# COUNTRY MANAGEMENT



**Emmy Turikumwe**  
Country Director,  
Rwanda



**Mayuya Athanase**  
Assistant Director,  
Rwanda



**Martha Peace Bua**  
Country Director,  
Uganda



**Cathy Nimusiima**  
Program Coordinator,  
Uganda



**Kadiatou Diallo**  
Finance Officer,  
Guinea



**Sékou Konaté**  
Program Coordinator,  
Guinea



**Mohamed Lamine Bangoura**  
Program Coordinator,  
Guinea



**Vialenny Rosario**  
Program Coordinator,  
USA (NYC)



**Moussa Cissokho**  
Program Coordinator,  
Mauritania



**Aliou Dioum**  
Program Coordinator,  
Mauritania

## VOLUNTEERS

*MindLeaps' volunteers provide considerable and vital support. The many roles they undertake include communications, English teaching, translation, and editing. Senior Leadership and the Board are grateful to the following for their commitment and significant contributions:*

**Debi Maller, Anne-Sophie Matichard, Susan Pasley, Sirianna Santacrose, Colleen Simon, Laura Solomon, and Marie Windal.**

*And, special thanks to **Tanja Raic Tarcuki** and **Gary Shaye**, who sit as volunteers on MindLeaps' Sustainability Committee.*

## THANK YOU, RAMIE!

In October 2025, **Ramie Arian** stepped down as MindLeaps Board Chair after five years of impressive service. He helped steer the organization through the pandemic and establish the basis for strong programming in the United States. We are grateful for his leadership!

# OUR SUPPORTERS IN 2025

## Foundations



## Partners



## Government



# FINANCIALS FY 2025

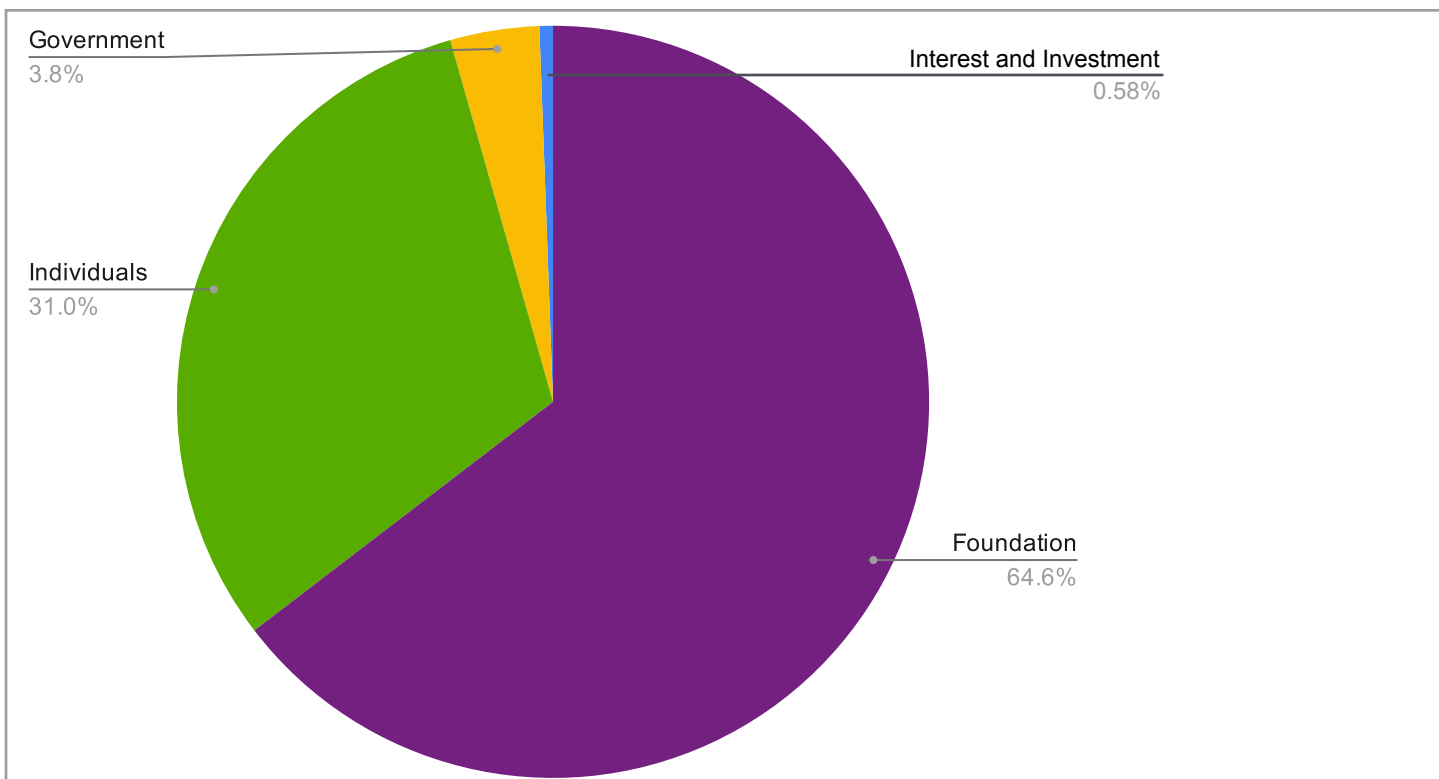
## MindLeaps Statement of Activity (Unaudited)

January 2025 - December 2025

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Total</b>
Foundation	\$934,000		
Individual	\$448,037	<b>Program Expenses:</b>	
Government	\$55,374	Rwanda	\$266,169
Interest and Investment	\$8,373	Guinea	\$286,901
		Uganda	\$236,034
		Mauritania	\$154,232
		North Macedonia*	\$13,196
		USA Program	\$147,609
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,445,784</b>	<b>Operational Expenses:</b>	
		USA G&A	\$128,973
		USA Fundraising	\$67,314
		<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$1,300,428</b>

\*MindLeaps North Macedonia became an independent operation at the end of 2024. This represents the last direct funding installment from MindLeaps Global to North Macedonia.

## MindLeaps FY 2025: Sources of Revenue





## MindLeaps

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Special thanks to photographer  
Miki Powell!!

SCAN HERE TO DONATE



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